



June 4, 2003

Trinity River Restoration Program
P. O. Box 1300
Weaverville, California 96093

Dear Sirs:

Reference Trinity County Planning Department Natural Resources Division Public Notice dated May 29, 2003.

I have lived on the west bank of the Trinity River since 1981 in the so-called Salt Flat subdivision. In the floods of 1982-83, Our bridge across the river was unusable for 8 weeks. The residents were obliged to hike over an old road to Rush Creek where we parked our cars. The bridge had washed out in 1980. The residents hired Leo Davis to extend the 45 foot span bridge another 45 feet, but during the high water of 82-83, the approach was washed out.

a.

In the summer of 1983, we engaged Leo Davis to extend the bridge an additional 180 feet to high ground. I personally went to Oroville and arranged for the purchase and delivery of two 90 foot railroad car spans. The bridges were mounted on piers driven to bedrock. All expenses for the bridge and road maintenance were paid by Salt Flat property owners. We got zero help from the County.

The bridge and approach were well engineered as proved by the fact that the bridge stood the flood of 1-1-97 with no damage even though water was flowing over the top of the bridge. A hydrologist named Scott McBain estimated the flow at near 15,000 cubic feet per second. We didn't have any rip rap at all, and we didn't lose a grain of sand from our approaches. We have enjoyed the uninterrupted use of our bridge for 20 years.

b.

One point I want to make is that the Salt Flat Property Owners Association which owns the bridge and the roads did not ask for a new bridge to be built at public expense. My personal opinion is that our bridge can withstand as much water as the dam is capable of releasing (13,500 cfs), provided there is not a lot of runoff from the creeks resulting from a cloudburst in the mountains or excessive snow melt.

Another point is that I question the basic premise—that increasing the flow down the river will improve the fishery. I have watched for 22 years as the Department of Fish and Game has endeavored in one failed experiment after another, trying to cure an intractable problem caused by the dams.

c.

The fish hatchery was supposed to mitigate the problem caused by the dams. By the time I arrived in 1981, the fish population in the river had decreased by 80 percent. Then they dug a deep hole in the river bed above our bridge so salmon would have a place to rest on their

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ream migration. That hole filled up with river run in the flood of 82-83. The next riment which I could observe from my deck was to scarify the river bed with huge oundozers pulling rippers through the gravel to release sediment. It muddied the river, but I saw no sign that it improved the spawning beds. Next they built "side channels" all along the river bank so the little fish could have a place to hide from the big fish. One side channels runs under our bridge. What else can we try?

Obviously willows and alders have grown on the banks, sandbars, and flood plains since the dams were built. This riparian vegetation is today constricting the river into narrow swift channels unsuited for spawning grounds. The obvious solution to this problem is to destroy the dams—but we know that won't happen. Another possibility is to increase the flows down the river to wash out the willows and alders. Unfortunately, that won't happen either.

d.

From my deck, I have watched an island of bare rock left by the 1982-83 flood grow from a small patch to more than an acre covered with willows and alders 20-30 feet high. Willows have roots like a woman's long hair. High flows don't touch them. In the 97 flood, we watched 15,000 cfs or more going over that island. It didn't dislodge a clump of grass—much less willows and alders.

e.

The only practical way to remove the riparian barriers is to use mechanical means, bull dozers and back hoes. Once that is done, then perhaps high flows could keep them from reforming. We are getting the cart before the horse in more ways than one. First we are going to replace the bridges, then we are going to use mechanical means to remove the berms, then at some point in the future, we are going to increase the flows to a level which might or might not threaten our bridge--- the judge in the Central Valley lawsuit permitting, that is.

in my opinion, this whole TRR Program is being driven—not by the need to improve the fishery, but by the fact there is some government money out there. If we don't spend that money, we lose it (that is, the taxpayers get to keep it). This a sorry justification for pushing one more experiment in the Trinity River.

f.

The residents of Salt Flat are an independent bunch who are willing to take on the maintenance of the roads and bridge in order to preserve our privacy. I will join with my neighbors and will fight with all my resources to keep the government from taking our hard won private property for public access to the river, to trail heads, or to an Indian burial plot that has been neglected for 100 years.

g.

The Proposed Action at the Salt Flat Bridge has my support, provided there is no public access.

h.

Yours truly,



JAMES R. EVANS

RESPONSE TO COMMENT:4

James Evans

4-a,b: Thank you for your response. The information provided on the impacts of the 1982/1983 and 1997 floods to the Salt Flat Bridge and your ability to access your property is important. This information will be incorporated into Section 3.4.1 (Water Resources, Affected Environment, Environmental Setting).

- Page 3.4-6 of the EA/EIR has been revised to read

The flood season on the Trinity River usually lasts from October through April, when over 90 percent of the annual precipitation falls. Floods on the Trinity River are somewhat controlled by the dams upstream of Lewiston. The greatest flood recorded for the area occurred in December 1955. Floods have also been recorded for the years 1862, 1926, 1928, 1937, 1940, 1941, 1948, 1950, 1958, 1960, 1963, 1964, 1972, and 1974 (FEMA 1996) and 1997.

Reportedly, the 1982/1983 flood rendered the Salt Flat Bridge unusable for 8 weeks. The residents were obliged to hike over an old road to Rush Creek (Route 3, Appendix K). In 1983, the Salt Flat Bridge was extended 180 feet to higher ground. In 1997, the bridge withstood the flows, although it was overtopped.

The reach of the Trinity River between Lewiston Lake and Douglas City flows through canyon and forest areas along the southeast edge of Browns Mountain. This mountain is located in the east central portion of the county. The flat areas are now covered by dredger tailings from gold mining operations. This reach of the stream has a slope of approximately 20 feet per mile (FEMA 1996).

4-c: Thank you for your comment. Your comment has been noted. No response is required.

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4-c: Thank you for your comment. Your comment has been noted, and will be transmitted to the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and federal officials for their consideration in connection with the merits of the proposed project. No further response is required.